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SUBJECT: VISIT OF SPECIAL U.N. ENVOY JAMES MORRIS ON THE
ZIMBABWE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

¶1. Summary: On January 24, Ambassador Sullivan and key Mission staff attended a meeting and lunch with Special U.N. Envoy James Morris and members of his delegation during his recent visit to Zimbabwe. At these events, Morris provided briefings on the current international, regional and country-specific humanitarian situation, current U.N. plans and priorities for responding to the crisis, and the results of his discussions (to that point in time) with top-level Government of Zimbabwe decision-makers, including President Mugabe. Although little substantive progress was noted on the many critical issues affecting the country's complex, interwoven crises, Morris' visit provided the opportunity for an updated assessment of the situation and possible revised priorities and options for a more effective future international response. While overall country prospects appear negative, Morris noted some positive movement since his last visit in several important areas. However, desires to shift from short-term relief response to longer-term mitigation/recovery activities are obstructed by the continuing adverse GOZ policy environment. Without significant political change, the prospects appear dim for an effective transition to recovery in Zimbabwe. Hence, given the negative near-term predictions, we are expecting a prolonged relief response with associated USG resource requirements, at the very least similar to last year's levels. Despite this rather gloomy outlook, Morris (and WFP) continue to impress us with their performance. The Mission recommends continuing USG support for on-going humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe, as FY2003 resources permit. End Summary.

¶2. On January 24, Ambassador Sullivan, USAID Director Weisenfeld and Aidoff attended a U.N. meeting with Special U.N. Envoy (SE) for the Southern African Humanitarian Crisis (and Executive Director of the World Food Program (WFP), James Morris. The meeting was well attended by high-level representatives of most OECD country missions to Zimbabwe, as well as the principal representatives of most U.N. agencies in Zimbabwe. Morris was accompanied on the visit by a large team of U.N. officials representing relevant U.N. agencies, including the Special U.N. Envoy for HIV/AIDS Stephen Lewis, Associate Administrator/Director of Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Response UNDP, Julia Taft, and WFP's Southern Africa Crisis Coordinator, Judith Lewis. Immediately following the meeting, Ambassador Sullivan hosted a lunch for selected members of the delegation, including Morris, Taft and J. Lewis, as well as the U.N. Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Zimbabwe (HC) J. Victor Angelo and the WFP Country Representative Kevin Farrell. Selected Mission staff also attended.

¶3. The stated purpose of the visit (part of a six-country tour) was to follow up on the results of SE Morris's first mission to Zimbabwe in September 2002, focusing especially on: 1) the additional challenges to the humanitarian paradigm imposed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, 2) an enhanced role for women in the humanitarian response, and 3) recommended "structural changes" in the humanitarian response to accommodate the revised country (and regional) scenario since his last visit and provide the "comprehensive" international response to the regional crisis called for by U.N. Secretary-General Annan. This latter point was the rationale for the large, multi-sectoral composition of the accompanying delegation. Note: The meeting started slightly later than scheduled as the delegation was delayed in finishing an "unscheduled" meeting with President Mugabe and relevant Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) ministers and officials immediately prior to this event. End Note.

¶4. Morris began the meeting by noting the extremely challenging humanitarian situation the world faced,

particularly in Africa, with the significant additional/competing emergency relief requirements imposed by the Horn region. Note: Morris had just visited Ethiopia prior to coming to southern Africa. End Note. He then thanked all countries present for their generous food donations to date, stating that the WFP was handling more food now than at any time in its history (over US\$1 billion worth in 2002). For southern Africa, he noted that WFP's regional and Zimbabwe country appeals were about 60 and 66 percent met, respectively. As a result, Zimbabwe's food pipeline looked relatively healthy now (in contrast to last month), with continuing incremental improvements in coverage expected through March 2003 (i.e., the end of the current WFP Emergency Operation (EMOP) period). However, given the serious problems with the current agricultural season (as well as other extenuating factors, such as GOZ mismanagement, the adverse effects of the fast-track land fiasco and HIV/AIDS), he emphasized the continuing urgency of the situation, indicating a requirement of an additional 100,000 MT of food for the Zimbabwe EMOP to cover a planned three-month extension of the appeal period to June 2003. Note: With the delays experienced to date in the start-up of this program as well as the temporary drop in aid requirements anticipated following the April harvest, this additional/extended target can readily be met within the existing WFP food appeal, if its requested amounts are provided in full. End Note.

15. Following these introductory comments, the focus of Morris' briefing was on the results of his earlier meetings with Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) officials, including GOZ Minister of Foreign Affairs Mudenge and the meeting with President Mugabe. Note: HC Angelo also noted that the delegation had several additional, more specific meetings scheduled during the ensuing course the visit with a wide variety of GOZ ministers and officials. End Note.

16. Morris described the Mugabe meeting as a general review of progress in the response to the country's humanitarian crisis since his last visit. While no major breakthroughs were reported (unlike the last visit - see reftel A), they agreed that some "progress" had been achieved on some issues. Examples included NGO registration/approval for WFP operations (from four organizations in September to 12 now), importation of Genetically Modified (GM) food products (accepted, with WFP milling - including local milling - and labeling prior to distribution), and some improvement in providing permits for food imports (although problems remain in this area). On the GM issue, Morris noted, parenthetically, the extreme importance of the movement in this area, stating that, given the tremendous importance of USG contributions (accounting for about half of the total response worldwide), "they couldn't succeed if all countries were like Zambia." Although the discussions touched on most of the now familiar issues (e.g., GOZ Grain Marketing Board (GMB) monopoly/private sector participation, price controls on basic commodities, foreign exchange shortages/controls, political interference/manipulation of food aid, the plight of the ex-commercial farm workers, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its relationship to the food crisis, etc.), Morris reported little evidence of significant GOZ movement in most of these areas. The possible exception was Mugabe's apparent support for a possible wheat monetization program for urban areas, which are becoming increasingly vulnerable due to the persistent market shortages and spiraling black market prices. While there appeared to be some recognition of the increasing severity of the humanitarian situation in country, generally, Morris indicated his impression that government appeared to have a "different view" of the situation, with "grandiose predictions" of agricultural production alleviating the crisis through such dubious schemes as expanded irrigated winter maize production (which failed dismally last year, as most experts had predicted).

17. Following Morris' presentation, SE S. Lewis briefly highlighted the tremendous additional problems the HIV/AIDS pandemic imposed on the crisis, with its significant additional burdens on individual sufferers (nutritional impacts), community coping structures (the increasing numbers of elderly and especially orphan-headed households), already-depleted health delivery systems, and prospects for agricultural/economic recovery (labor shortages). AA Taft then echoed these sentiments, suggesting a greater focus on women (as primary family care givers and food producers/providers), and the possibility of capacity-building initiatives to mitigate the effects of the serious "brain drain" of skilled health sector personnel. Notable on this subject was Foreign Minister Mudenge's comment in an earlier meeting with the delegation likening the alarming scope of the pandemic in Zimbabwe (and, indeed, southern Africa) to a form of "genocide" (in the rhetorical sense only, of course).

18. The briefing concluded with a statement of U.N.

priorities in future response efforts, including:

- the need to better integrate the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic into country analysis and response activities;
- the need for greater support in the non-food areas of assistance (health, nutrition, agricultural recovery, etc.) for a truly comprehensive international response; and
- the need to begin to promote the transition from short-term relief response to longer-term recovery/transition initiatives to mitigate the crisis.

¶9. While other subjects were touched on (the situation on the ground, HIV/AIDS, urban monetization, agricultural season prospects, etc.), the ensuing audience discussion focused overwhelmingly on the relative merits of attempting longer-term development solutions within the current adverse GOZ policy environment. While additional support for short-term humanitarian relief activities seemed inevitable, most donor country representatives present expressed serious reservations about longer-term support in the absence of significant reform of relevant government policies (especially, but not exclusively, the land problem). Until significant political reform occurred, the response was likely to be limited to short-term humanitarian relief (recognizing the negative potential effects this approach might have in prolonging the crisis and the concomitant increased international response requirements).

¶10. The ensuing luncheon discussion at Ambassador Sullivan's residence repeated these same themes, with a greater focus on HIV/AIDS and possible innovative cross-sectoral initiatives that might be pursued within the current country context. Suggestions discussed here included using WFP food relief operations to promote AIDS awareness (through messages on bags, presentations/messages at distribution sites, etc.) and providing Food-for-Health Workers (to attempt to arrest the significant loss of trained sector personnel).

¶11. Comment: As for his last visit, his schedule during this visit clearly demonstrates that SE Morris continues to enjoy excellent access to top-level GOZ decision-makers. However, contrary to his last visit, it appears that these interactions are yielding diminishing returns. While more significant movement on key GOZ policies was evident in September, despite the increasingly dire nature of the country situation, there appears to be reduced prospects for substantive policy reform at this time (other than "tinkering" with existing policies to reduce some of the operational constraints to the response effort). From the donor response, it also seems evident that until such substantive reform occurs, the prospects for a transition from relief to longer-term recovery remain dim. Hence, given the negative prospects for the current agricultural season, it would appear that the humanitarian crisis is set to continue for some time to come (with the associated additional USG relief requirements that this situation will entail). Within this pessimistic framework, the Mission generally endorses Morris' (and WFP) response efforts to date (under extremely difficult circumstances), and supports the continuation of USG assistance to the Zimbabwe humanitarian response, as resources permit. In this regard, we would highlight the possibility for a renewed look at urban monetization schemes in Zimbabwe in response to the more encouraging inputs received on this subject during this visit. Sullivan